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Winsome and you win some

Place of refuge and healing

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WHEN Gary Shallala-Hudson was sleeping rough he looked after the wood his guitar is now made of better than he looked after himself.

So to watch Luke playing an INXS song on it at The Homelessness Connect Day at The Winsome during Homelessness prevention week last Thursday was enough to bring tears to his eyes.

The guitar, made of Brazilian and Honduran mahogany, flamed maple and Queensland cypress, was to be a gift to his late father's memory. He had been a classically trained musician before he died and Gary wanted to make the most "beautiful instrument out of rare wood" that he could.

But Gary had found himself suffering from agoraphobia as a result of post traumatic stress disorder which saw him drop out of society.

The wood became a talisman of hope.

"It was a reason to keep

on keeping on," he said.

A decade later, Gary was able to do a workshop with wood master Geoff Hannah at the Regional Gallery in Lismore where he made his guitar. Never having played a "song from start to finish" he went on to play in a band with some people with whom he was living.

At The Homelessness Connect gathering, Luke jumped on the opportunity to play the guitar in front of the ebullient audience at The Winsome, saying it had "a beautiful action." Today, Gary works as a peer worker and volunteer within the mental health system.

The Winsome Hotel brought together a variety of local service providers who offered community health services, tenancy advice, housing help, legal aid and counselling. There were free haircuts, clothing, toiletries and lunch provided, as well as a performance by the Healing Voices Choir and other live music.

Blankets and towels, warm jackets, non-perishable food, and new socks and underwear were also provided.

Homelessness Connect partners with Northern Rivers Social Development Council, OTCP, North Coast Community Housing, The Winsome & Lismore Soup Kitchen Salvation Army, Centrelink, Consortium of Neighbourhood Centres (CONC) and Connecting Home.

“It (the wood) was a reason to keep keeping on.”

— Gary Shallala-Hudson



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CUT STRAIGHT TO YOUR NEWS

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SPRUCED UP: Anthony James Provert getting his first haircut in 20 years from Jo Grenfell at Homeconnect Day at The Winsome in Lismore.



LIFE LINE: Luke and Gary Shallala-Hudson with the guitar that saved him from homelessness at Homelessness Connect Day at The Winsome. PHOTOS: SOPHIE MOELLER